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Country Report

2010 Edition

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PRINT VERSION

Mauritania (2010)

Capital: Nouakchott
Population: 3,291,000

Political Rights Score: 6
Civil Liberties Score: 5
Status: Not Free

[Overview](#)

General Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, who overthrew President Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdellahi in an August 2008 military coup, was declared the winner of a July 2009 presidential election. The results, while accepted by some foreign observers, were rejected by opposition parties.

Following independence from France in 1960, Mauritania was ruled by a series of civilian and military authoritarian regimes. In 1984, Colonel Maouya Ould Sidi Ahmed Taya ousted President Mohamed Khouna Ould Haidallah. Although Taya introduced a multiparty system in 1991, he repeatedly secured poll victories for himself and his Democratic and Social Republican Party (PRDS) through the misuse of state resources, suppression of the opposition, and manipulation of the media and electoral institutions.

Soldiers led by Colonel Ely Ould Mohamed Vall finally overthrew Taya's government in August 2005, and the move was greeted with strong public support. Soon after taking power, the Military Council for Justice and Democracy (CMJD) pardoned and released hundreds of political prisoners, and dozens of political activists returned from exile. The CMJD set a timeline for holding elections and established an independent electoral commission to administer the process. Voters in June 2006 approved a constitutional amendment limiting presidents to two five-year terms. Legislative and municipal elections were held in November and December 2006, with independent candidates, mostly former PRDS members, securing a majority of the seats. Independents also won a majority of seats in January and February 2007 Senate elections. Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdellahi, running as an independent, won the presidency in March with 52 percent of the

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